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Failure of Conflict Management and Resolution in Sudan

Mubashir
BS International Relations
NUML Faisalabad Campus
Maryam Ali*
Lecturer, International Relations
NUML Faisalabad Campus
Correspondence Author Email: maryam.ali@numl.edu.pk
Eman Fatima
BS International Relations
NUML Faisalabad Campus
Khadija Shahbaz
Lecturer, International Relations
NUML Faisalabad Campus

Abstract:

Sudan is one of the most persistent and analytically consequential examples where peacebuilding doesn't work in contemporary international relations. The country has been hit over and over by armed clashes since its independence in 1956, which are tied to older colonial-era asymmetries, economic marginalization, contests over resources, and the way successive governments have repeatedly used armed factions as tools. Even with a lot of internationally sponsored activity, like the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, the Juba Peace Agreement 2020, and big peacekeeping efforts such as UNAMID, Sudan's conflict have stayed unresolved. This all culminated in the devastating April 2023 war which led to the world's largest internal displacement crisis. In this paper, a qualitative secondary research approach has been used to examine the structural failure to manage conflict in Sudan. This failure comes from mediation that lacks real enforcement leverage, exclusionary peace templates, competing external patronage networks, hollow state-building, and ongoing neglect of structural violence. By looking at policy briefs and academic writings, the paper argues that lasting peace in Sudan will demand a fundamental reshaping of the peacebuilding architecture; that really emphasizes structural change, inclusive participation, and a true enforcement capacity, rather than focusing only on procedural compliance

Keywords: *Conflict resolution, Geopolitical market, International mediation, Power politics, Peacebuilding failure, Structural violence*

Introduction:

Sudan has singular seat in the study of lingering conflict and how international peacebuilding actually plays out, few other states have produced as many peace arrangements, or hosted as many peacekeeping deployments, yet somehow stayed trap in violence. Ever since independence in 1956, Sudan has lived through two big civil wars, a genocide

in Darfur, then a run of successive authoritarian governments, and a democratic upheaval that later slid into military consolidation; and one of the fastest accelerating armed conflagrations in modern record. The fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has since forced, more than ten million people to move inside Sudan and pushed over 3.2 million beyond its borders (UNHCR, 2025) intensifying what the United Nations calls one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises (OCHA, 2023).

The central argument is that the failure of conflict resolution in Sudan is not just a random incident but more structural, like it actually comes from the design of things, the assumptions, and the political limitations in the international frameworks that get used to manage Sudanese conflicts. In practice, these frameworks have pushed elite-level bargaining rather than something more inclusive for political settlements. They also focus on formal institution-building, instead of substantive governance change. The emphasis on procedural compliance while ignoring the deeper structural redress and resource inequalities that keep feeding cycles of violence. So, the outcome, is a peacebuilding track record that generates agreements yet no implementation happens, peacekeepers without real protection capability and transitional institutions that lack democratic legitimacy.

This paper uses a qualitative secondary approach, drawing on a structured review of peer-reviewed academic literature, United Nations reports, and paperwork from major international non-governmental organizations like the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch. It also relies on primary policy documents, including peace agreements and Security Council resolutions. This paper is aims to study Sudan conflict in more analytical than empirical manner, it synthesizes and also critically questions the existing knowledge about Sudanese conflict and peacebuilding. The work is steered by three research questions; first, what structural and historical conditions have produced Sudan's recurring cycles of armed conflict? Second, through what mechanisms have internationally sponsored conflict management efforts including peace agreements peacekeeping missions, mediation initiatives, and accountability mechanisms actually ended up falling short when it comes to lasting peace? Third, what theoretical and practical implications does the Sudanese case carry for future design of conflict resolution frameworks in similarly intricate, multi-party conflicts? Taken together, Sudan's tragedy isn't simply a failure of international attention, it's more like a failure of international imagination, a persistent inability to go beyond templates that are ill-suited to the realities of a fractured, patronage-driven, and geopolitically contested state.

Literature Review:

A research paper by Ahmed Soliman and Suliman Baldo (2025) "Gold and the war in Sudan How regional solutions can support an end to conflict" from Chatham House, lays out a very thorough way how Sudan's gold sector turned into a driver of the 2023 civil war and also a main way that the warring sides keep going even under international pressure. It examines hat Sudan was exporting 27-50 tons of gold to the UAE every year between 2019 and 2022. And it wasn't just "clean" trade either; they argue that a huge sum came from mining operations that were under RSF control in Darfur, then it got moved onward via intermediary places like Chad, Libya, and the Central African Republic. The report then traces where this political economy really starts, saying it grows out of the post 2011 period. After oil revenues fell due to South Sudan's secession, both the SAF and the RSF had to push harder to expand their grip on artisanal gold mining, essentially treating it as an independent cash source. A key point they make is that competition over gold wasn't only background noise it was a close up, proximate trigger behind the April 2023 fighting. In particular, as RSF controlled mining around North Darfur and around

Jebel Amer kept expanding, SAF linked actors moved to set up their own competing extraction networks. It also traces out the Russian Wagner Group, through its Meroe Gold subsidiary that helped facilitate weapons deliveries and hidden financial flows. There's discussion of the UAE's structural incentive, meaning it has a reason to keep RSF capacity available, so it can maintain steady access to Sudanese gold. Soliman and Baldo's analysis powerfully illustrates how the political economy of conflict in Sudan makes international sanctions largely ineffective, since both parties still retain access to commodity revenues outside the formal banking system. But the report doesn't really grapple with, the gendered dimension of conflict financing; more specifically, how people in mining zones, and especially women, end up taking a disproportionate hit of the violence and dispossession that goes alongside the securitization of gold extraction.

Munzoul A. M. Assal and Abdelmageed Yahya (2025) article “The Failure of Mediation and Peacemaking Efforts in the Sudan Crisis” published by the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) has argued that Sudan's peace processes have a shared structural illness: with the partial exception of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, which was between just two parties, every later agreement, including the CPA, the Darfur Peace Agreement, and the Juba Peace Agreement, has ended up with an exclusionary design. In other words, it supposedly privileged the concerns of armed elites rather than the wider political community, including civil society women's organizations and community-based actors. The work demonstrates that when key armed movements were not properly included, and when the agreement also failed to address cantonment, security sector integration, and resource sharing, that combination ends up contributing directly to the breakdown of the transitional government. The article also analyzes the external mediators in a critical manner, the IGAD, the African Union, and the Troika have repeatedly placed more emphasis on procedural “signing” type matters, rather than real substantive transformation. So, you get documents that can meet the formal expectations of international peacebuilding, but they don't change the deeper incentive system that Sudanese elites keep benefiting from. Finally, the article places these mediation problems into a bigger, longer pattern of Khartoum centered governance. That pattern, according to the authors has historically offered peripheral communities' inclusion, but in name only, which then reinforces a center-periphery dynamic that has been shaping Sudanese conflict since independence. A notable analytical gap, however, is the article's limited engagement with the role of the ICC and international accountability mechanisms in shaping or failing to shape the elite behavior during and after peace negotiations.

UN Women (2024) “Gender alert: Women and girls of Sudan: Fortitude amid the flame of war” serves as a key document for understanding the structural aspects of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan and the systematic failure of the conflict management system to protect the most vulnerable populations. The GA provides documentation that there was an increase in the number of people needing gender-based violence-related services from 3.5 million in April 2023 (when fighting broke out) to 6.7 million by December 2023. This included 5.8 million internally displaced women and girls who were exposed to increasing levels of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse in out-of-home facilities throughout Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan. This report identifies a structural gap in the international humanitarian response to the crisis: in 2023, women-led organizations which are often the most contextually embedded, operationally effective within crisis-affected communities; together received only 1.63% of the total financial resources made available by the Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SHF). This represents a continuation of the historical pattern of excluding gender-responsive approaches from the formal humanitarian architecture. The GA is valuable not only as a record of harm done to women, but also as a critique of the international conflict management architecture: the

systematic exclusion of women from formal peace processes, combined with the underfunding of community-based women-led organizations, has not only failed to adequately address the causes of gendered violence but has also failed to address its consequences.

Sudan's Protracted Conflict Landscape:

Recurring Patterns of Violence:

Sudan political history is hard to split from the cycles of armed conflict that keep rolling, across successive regimes, colonial legacies, and later post-independence power struggles. Since independence in 1956, Sudan has had more years of civil war than time in peace, so it ends up among the most conflict-affected states in modern African history. And these repeating patterns aren't just random, they are the symptoms of deeper, structural contradictions inside the Sudanese state itself, where political authority has stayed concentrated in a narrow Khartoum-centered elite, while the peripheral regions are kept economically sidelined and militarily restrained or repressed, depending on the year and who is in charge.

The First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972) was basically the Arab-Muslim north set against a largely Christian and animist south, arguments were about resource distribution, political representation and cultural recognition. Even though the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972) paused the fighting for a while, the war came back in 1983 after President Nimeiry imposed Sharia law, and that move showed how thin the negotiated compromises were in Sudan. Then the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) is often described as devastating, with estimates putting it at around two million lives lost, and more than four million displaced (United Nations Security Council, 2005). The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in 2005, which finally paved the way for South Sudan's secession in 2011, got a lot of international praise, but it still left the core governance contradictions stuck inside the remaining Sudanese state.

Root Causes & Conflict Drivers:

The Sudan's long- running conflict is built from several drivers at once, not just one neat cause. To begin with, the colonial way Sudan was put together as a single, unitary state, without really thinking about ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences, sets up the whole legitimacy dispute right from the start (Weiss, 2009). Then, during the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium period, Britain used this "closed district" policy that left the south and the western fringes more or less cut off. That isolation generated uneven development, which later governments after independence inherited, and then, rather than fixing it they deepened that same imbalance.

Next, there is resources, like land, water, and oil revenues. These aren't just minor issues; they have worked as a spark and also a kind of accelerator for violence. In Darfur, for example, tensions between sedentary farming groups and nomadic pastoralists intensified as arable land shrank. That squeeze was made worse by desertification and climate pressure, and it helped create an environment where mobilization could slide into ethnic lines (Juan & Wegner, 2019). But the state didn't try mediation. Instead, it went for militarization, arming Arab Janjaweed militias to crush Darfuri insurgencies. And that approach, starting in 2003, is tied to mass atrocities, with estimates of around 300,000 deaths (Straus, 2005).

Third, Sudan's political economy of conflict is also shaped by how armed groups get instrumentalized, or used as tools. Across successive Khartoum governments, from Nimeiry to Bashir, there's this pattern of delegating violence to peripheral militias, in return for temporary loyalty. Over time this produced a fragmented security setup, where groups multiply,

split off, and re-align often depending on patronage money and the flow of support, not on actual political agreements, or negotiated settlements.

The 2023 War:

The outbreak of war in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) shows the most acute form of Sudan's long, ongoing conflict. The RSF, led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo "Hemedti", actually grew out of the Janjaweed militias, and then it became a kind of parallel fighting structure after Sudan's 2019 revolution that removed long time President Omar al-Bashir. After al-Bashir, the handover led by the Sovereignty Council couldn't do the basics, it didn't fold the RSF into one unified command, and it also failed to create civilian control or supervision (International Crisis Group , 2023). Then fighting started in Khartoum on April 15, 2023 and it moved quickly to Darfur, Kordofan, and several other areas. Within only a few months, the conflict left more than seven million people internally displaced, and it pushed over 1.5 million people to run across borders into neighboring countries. That makes it one of the fastest accelerating displacement emergencies worldwide (UNHCR, 2023).

Architecture of Conflict Management & Resolution in Sudan:

Peace Processes & Agreements:

Sudan's peace architecture is pretty wide-ranging, deeply flawed and it's basically characterized by deals that got signed without the political will or the institutional muscle needed to actually put them in motion. Take the Addis Ababa Agreement (1972) as a first kind of warning sign: it fell apart less than a decade later, and that collapse showed that agreements grounded in elite bargaining rather than structural change, are almost always reversible. Then there was the CPA of 2005, brokered under the umbrella of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and supported by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Norway (the "Troika"). It tried to tackle the North-South divide but it also, quite deliberately, left Darfur and other conflict zones outside its scope (Young, 2006).

The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) of 2006, signed in Abuja between the Sudanese government and one faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), followed a similar pattern, and it was still limited. Only a single rebel faction signed up, while major movements, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), refused to engage. The whole thing collapsed almost right away, and it ended up worsening internal fractures among Darfuri groups (de Waal, 2008).

After that, the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) of 2011 tried to breathe life back into negotiations, but it ran into the same exclusionary logic again. Most big armed groups boycotted the process, so implementation stayed largely nominal.

And most recently, the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) of 2020, signed between the Transitional Sovereignty Council and a coalition of armed movements, was hailed as a sort of milestone toward inclusive peace. Still, its rollout stalled almost immediately, because of disagreements over cantonment of fighters, resource-sharing terms, and the marginalization of civil society actors from the process. (Human Rights Watch , 2021)

Peacekeeping Missions:

International peacekeeping in Sudan has been going on for years, but it feels mostly extensive and yet not really effective. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), launched to Darfur in 2004, was stuck from the very beginning by a mix of inadequate resources, a mandate that was too narrow, and logistics that couldn't keep up. They had roughly 7,000

troops to oversee an area the size of France, so AMIS was structurally not able to safeguard civilians in any real way (Bellamy & Williams, 2005).

Then the hybrid African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), created in 2007 via UN Security Council Resolution 1769, became the biggest peacekeeping operation in the world at its high point. It had more than 19,000 uniformed staff and an annual budget over $1 billion. Still, UNAMID had to work under a host government that did not really consent, and that government regularly blocked its movement, pushed out aid personnel, and refused access to the most affected conflict zones. In the end, the mission's role narrowed to basically observation, and it achieved only slight results in protecting civilians or opening pathways for humanitarian assistance. UNAMID was pulled out in 2020 while conditions kept worsening, and that move was widely criticized by international actors (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007).

As for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), it was set up in 2021 to help with Sudan's democratic transition, but it did not have an executive peace enforcement mandate. Later, after the October 2021 military coup, civilian transitional governance was dismantled, and UNITAMS was dissolved too. (United Nations , 2025)

International Mediation & Post-Bashir Efforts:

After al-Bashir was removed in April 2019, international players like the African Union, United States, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates started mediating with a lot of intensity to help Sudan stabilize its transition. The AU-brokered Constitutional Declaration of August 2019 set up a sort of power sharing deal between civilian groups and military figures. The whole arrangement got quietly undermined because the military seemed unwilling to give up control, especially over key economic and security bodies (Ali, 2020).

Then in 2021, the coup led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the commander of the SAF, together with Hemedti's RSF, pretty much tore down the transitional plan in practice. International reactions, mostly condemnations, suspension of aid, and fresh attempts at mediation through the "Trilateral Mechanism" (AU, IGAD, and the UN), did not manage to stop the coup, nor bring civilian governance back. The Framework Agreement from December 2022 was supposed to restart the process, but it was never really carried out, because tensions between the rival military blocs kept rising, and by April 2023 this turned into open fighting (International Crisis Group , 2023).

Sanctions, Accountability & ICC:

In 2009 and 2010, The International Criminal Court (ICC) put out arrest warrants for President Omar al-Bashir, accusing him of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity tied to Darfur, this was the first time the court indicted a sitting head of state. Still, the warrants had, not much real-world effect; al-Bashir kept going to AU member states without being arrested, and that situation basically laid bare the friction between the ICC and the African Union, which claimed the court was hitting African leaders in a way that felt uneven (Lhotsky, 2016). Sudan never handed Bashir over to The Hague, so after his removal in 2019 the transitional authorities ran into heavy internal pushback against any transfer in the first place.

Meanwhile, the targeted sanctions from the United States and the European Union toward Sudanese officials and related entities also didn't really change elite behavior. Money from gold exports is mostly managed through networks linked to RSF that helped key actors dodge the financial squeeze (Global Witness, 2019). Taken together, the accountability setup in Sudan shows a stubborn disconnect between what international norms promise, and what enforcement ability can actually deliver.

Diagnosing the Failure:

Mediation without Leverage:

A central diagnosis of Sudan's peacebuilding failures comes down to mediation efforts being kind of structurally weak mainly because there isn't much real leverage over the main conflict parties, at least not in the sense that changes behavior. Effective mediation depends on parties actually seeing that the continued fighting costs more than settling. But in Sudan, dominant elites like military commanders, militia leaders, and commercial networks have, worked out that war pays better than peace, even if it's ugly and long lasting. Mediators, meanwhile, have rarely had coercive instruments strong enough to shift those calculations. During the Abuja negotiations, the African Union mediation team couldn't push the government of Sudan into making concrete concessions on security arrangements, wealth sharing, or the political status of Janjaweed forces. External guarantors, especially the United States, also didn't manage enough follow through to make the deals self-enforcing (de Waal, 2008).

On top of that, the whole mediation setup in Sudan has been fragmented, with several competing tracks moving at the same time. IGAD, the AU, the Arab League, Qatar, plus bilateral players like Egypt and Ethiopia, often pursued different agendas while still claiming peacemaking. This says amounts to a "political marketplace," where armed actors keep playing mediator against mediator to squeeze out resources, rather than commit to peace (Weiss, 2009).

Exclusionary Peacekeeping & Liberal Peace Template:

International peacebuilding in Sudan has been shaped a lot by liberal peace theory, the idea that democratic governance, rule of law, and market integration will basically create lasting peace. This "template" often just doesn't fit when state institutions are predatory and when civil society doesn't really have the organizing strength to resist elite capture of the peace dividends.

In Sudan, the liberal peace approach showed up in the CPA emphasis on elections, constitutional reform, and economic liberalization, but it did that without really engaging with the political economy of armed groups or the deeper structural marginalization affecting peripheral communities. The 2010 elections, run under the CPA framework were troubled by irregularities and boycotts and they mostly ended up reinforcing Bashir's rule (The Carter Center, 2010). So, the liberal peace promises, like elections and institutional changes would reshape Sudanese governance turned out to be more illusion than transformation.

Also, UNAMID's operating culture seems to underline the exclusionary way international peacekeeping can work. Even though the mission had a civilian protection mandate, its priorities were skewed toward host government consent, not toward the protection of vulnerable people. Reports and investigations by the UN Panel of Experts describe situations where UNAMID didn't report, or didn't respond, to mass atrocities, partly to avoid diplomatic friction with Khartoum (United Nations, 2015). In that sense peacekeepers ended up inside a stability fiction, which served the host government interest in keeping international scrutiny at bay, and not in protecting civilians in any real sense.

Geopolitical Market & External Actors:

Sudan's conflict has had a long-time of attraction for outside patrons, but their interests don't match up with sustainable peace. During the Cold War, both superpowers used Sudan as a strategic buffer and "played it" for leverage; in the post-Cold War period Sudan became a stage for regional power competition between actors like Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Libya, Chad, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Russia.

The part about the UAE and Saudi Arabia backing the RSF is well documented. Both states tended to see Hemedti's forces as a counterterrorism partner, and also

as a way to hold back, or at least balance Islamist influence in Sudan. Then, the RSF basically returned the favor by sending troops to Yemen in support of the Saudi-led coalition (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007). So, this whole setup built structural incentives for the UAE and Saudi Arabia to keep RSF capacity strong, rather than pushing for its integration into a unified military that's civilian-controlled. When the war kicked off in 2023, these patron patterns didn't just linger in the background they directly complicated any mediation: the Jeddah talks, organized by Saudi Arabia and the United States, produced ceasefires that the RSF repeatedly breached, partly because the external backers had little or no real cost for failing to comply (International Crisis Group , 2023).

Russia's involvement works in a similar direction, except it leans more toward business and geopolitical bargaining. Through the Wagner Group's gold mining activities in Sudan, and also via arms transfers to the SAF, Russia shows how commercial interests and geopolitics can quietly erode conflict resolution. Meanwhile the Security Council's ability to respond together on Sudan has been paralyzed mainly because the permanent members have diverging interests. As a result, the international community's actions have stayed episodic, and non-coercive, instead of being consistently forceful.

Institutional Weakness:

Internationally sponsored state building in Sudan has managed to get them mixed up, like confusing the formal institutional stuff with the real substantive change of governance. After the CPA, the post-CPA period saw a bunch of new constitutional commissions, legislative bodies, and electoral institutions get set up in the south though most of them ended up empty, once South Sudan slipped into its own civil war in 2013. In northern Sudan too, the transitional institutions that appeared after Bashir was removed in 2019 repeated the same pattern: civilian actors were included on paper but, in practice, they stayed structurally under the military's thumb.

The case of Sudan's security sector reform, SSR efforts, is probably the clearest example of this kind of failure. A range of agreements, including the CPA and the JPA, carried language about integrating rebel forces into national security structures and reforming the SAF. But these processes were systematically, quietly, derailed; instead of actually integrating armed groups, the government absorbed certain commanders while the deeper command arrangements and economic networks remained basically as they were. The RSF is arguably the biggest outcome of that dynamic too: it's a militia that got folded into the formal security architecture but wasn't put under civilian control, which then produced a parallel armed force that can challenge the state itself.

Failure to Address Structural Violence:

Maybe the most basic reading of why Sudan's conflict management keeps failing is that the actors quietly ignore structural violence, that is the ongoing inequalities, exclusions, and everyday humiliations locked inside economic, social, and political institutions. In Sudan, peace agreements have mostly gone after the visible arrangements, like ceasefires, power-sharing deals, and militia integration, but they don't focus on the deeper frame of marginalization underneath. In Darfur for example, people are still dealing with displacement, land dispossession, and exclusion from national political decision making even after decades since the wider international community first got involved with that regional crisis. And the groups hit hardest by the fighting are women, displaced people, ethnic minorities and children have been pushed out from peace processes. UN Women also noted that women were under 10% of the official delegates in the big Sudanese peace negotiations, even though they are often central to community survival and reconstruction work (Un Women, 2025).

What really keeps the problem going is that land rights have not been addressed properly, especially in Darfur and in the Nuba Mountains. So even if the gunfire calms down for a while, the material conditions that can restart the violence are still there, basically waiting. And international peacebuilders, they tend to hesitate on land reform because they think it’s too politically sensitive, but then this becomes part of a wider habit: they focus on procedure, on the mechanics of process, more than the structural changes that would actually matter.

Future Implications:

The compounding breakdowns of conflict management in Sudan carry deep consequences for regional stability, humanitarian governance, and also for what comes next in international peacebuilding theory and practice. The 2023 fighting has already generated one of the world’s most intense humanitarian emergencies, with the UN saying that more than 25 million people, more than half the population, need humanitarian aid (OCHA, 2023). Neighboring states like Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic are being hit by spillover through refugee flows, illicit arms circulation, and the sideways growth of armed group networks across borders. Destabilization in Sudan could set off a regional chain reaction, because the Sahel and the Horn of Africa already have governance systems that are very brittle.

Sudan’s situation also gives a strong, real-world critique of peacebuilding that relies on templates. Future interventions really need to go past talks between elites and instead plug into bottom-up approaches, those that work with community structures, women organizations and broader civil society networks that have been sidelined from official processes. The idea of “hybrid peace” (Ginty, 2011), where the focus is on how international structures meet local initiative, ends up offering a more useful analytical basis than the usual liberal peace story. For Accountability Mechanisms, the ICC’s limited impact in Sudan really highlights that we may need to rework the whole international accountability setup, because it keeps leaning on state cooperation. A more adaptive approach might involve hybrid tribunals that fold in Sudanese legal traditions as well as community-based justice mechanisms, because that can act more locally meaningful and also be easier to enforce in practice.

On the Architecture of Mediation, Sudan shows something similar but in a different way. Competitive, multi-actor mediation, especially when nobody has a clear lead, tends to wobble, and it lacks the real coordinating leverage needed to move actors toward actual compliance. Future mediation therefore should be grounded in a unified international framework, under AU or UN auspices, and it has to include compliance that can actually bite, not just be stated. That means targeted sanctions against spoilers, arms embargoes plus monitoring capacity, and financial assistance that stays conditional, tied to verifiable advances on civilian protection.

And ultimately, the conflict management failures in Sudan aren’t only about lack of will, it’s also about architecture. In other words, the frameworks are poorly matched to the structural realities on the ground: a fragmented society, patronage networks, and a geopolitically contested landscape. Unless the international community directly tackles these architectural gaps, Sudan will probably keep getting pulled back into cycles of violence, even if agreements are written very carefully and sound strong on paper.

Conclusion:

Sudan conflict stands out as one of the more instructive and sobering case studies in contemporary peace and conflict studies. The gathered weight of evidence shows that

the repeated failure to reach durable peace in Sudan are the result of interlocking structural weaknesses, so the mediation processes that produced agreements but without real enforcement capacity, and peacekeeping missions that ran with mandates but were structurally subordinate to host government consent. On top of that, accountability mechanisms whose normative reach went way beyond what they could actually do in practice, plus a bigger peacebuilding approach that seemed to favor the appearance of democratic transition rather than the substance of fair governance.

The April 2023 fighting between the SAF and the RSF did not rose from the void, it is the last stop of a political ride where each so called “peace” phase, from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005) all the way to the Juba Peace Agreement of 2020, failed to undo the patronage webs, parallel military arrangements, and exclusionary style of governing that basically keeps Sudanese conflict running. And the RSF is arguably the most important institutional outcome of that continuing failure: a militia absorbed into the state without real civilian supervision, funded through gold income that sanctions regimes could not really touch, and kept alive by external patrons whose own strategic interests, were quietly helped by the RSF staying independent (Tanner & Tubiana, 2007).

What Sudan asks the international community for isn’t more agreements, it’s a different peacebuilding setup, like fundamentally grounded in structural transformation, not just procedural box ticking. It should be about real inclusion of marginalized communities not elite co-optation, and also coordinated international engagement, not that competitive mediation thing where everyone tries to be the lead. Conceptually, the tools are already there, even if they get ignored. Hybrid peace frameworks (Ginty, 2011), structural violence theory, and political economy analyses of conflict (de Waal, 2008) all gesture toward interventions that are tuned to context, locally legitimate, and enforcement-capable. The tricky part isn’t really theory, it’s getting collective will to actually apply these ideas in a state where geopolitical competition, has displaced peacebuilding coherence. So, until that obstacle is handled, Sudan’s cycles of violence will likely keep coming back, and the international community’s track record in the country will keep looking like a monument to good intentions that never turned into structural resolve.

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